

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2015
ROOM 217
TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT**

CALL TO ORDER: 4:38 P.M.

ATTENDANCE:

DRAC: Jeffrey Gebrian, Chair (arrived at 5:20 pm for item #2), Sheldon Crosby, Vice-Chair; Members: Gordon Binkhorst, Fred Fritz; Matthew McGrath, Richard Hughes, and Alternate: Kimberly Parsons-Whitaker

Staff: Catherine Dorau, Associate Planner

REFERRAL FROM TOWN COUNCIL:

27 Park Road and 14 Ringgold Street - *Application on behalf of Center Development Corporation, contract purchaser and intended developer, and The Sisters of Saint Joseph, the owner of the property known as 27 Park Road and 14 Ringgold Street, to rezone a majority of the property from R-6 to RM-MS and then to designate the rezoned area to a Special Development District (SDD #145) to facilitate the redevelopment and reuse of the existing primary building and the construction of a new residential building containing 310 apartments units and 36 residential living units together with all associated parking, landscaping, lighting and signage. (Town Council receipt on October 27, 2015. Town Council public hearing scheduled for December 10, 2015. Initial DRAC Study Session on February 4, 2015. Additional study sessions on February 25, March 18, April 9 and October 21, 2015. DRAC receipt on November 4, 2015, additional review on November 19, 2015; further review by November 30, 2015.) DRAC recommended approval. Motion/Hughes; Second/Binkhorst (Vote: 6-0) (Gebrian was recused for this vote.)*

Associate Planner, Catherine Dorau briefly explained that it was the third formal meeting and that there were five study sessions. At the last meeting the DRAC requested additional details on the windows, cap stone, additional landscaping of the south parking area, elevation specific details, and a roof plan.

Sean Donadio from Northeast Collaborative Architects (NCA) addressed the DRAC concerns from November 19th. He described the materials on the outer corners of the stone panel and the rain screen system with a tight face metal edge. The roof plan showed mechanicals a minimum of 10' from the roof's edge. There was discussion between NCA and DRAC whether there was enough air circulation for the units and DRAC was assured that there was. DRAC discussed whether the use of 3 materials surrounding the windows was appropriate. Three islands with landscaping were added along the south parking area. The railings on the units will have a powder coat finish. The louvers are direct vent and are painted to match the Hardiplank siding or Nichiha panels. The generator will be enclosed in the old boiler house.

The DRAC found the application to be consistent with many of the DRAC's performance criteria. In particular they noted:

1. The relationship of the proposed building to the site and adjoining neighborhood is appropriate. The site design champions the historic preservation and adaptive re-use of existing buildings and utilizes landscaped elements and large setbacks from sensitive regulated areas and neighborhoods.

2. The overall architecture is superior to when this project first started the review process. The scale and use of colors, materials, and proportions of the northeast corner of the new building is both a complementary and a fitting architectural response to the historic integrity of the site.
3. The proposed landscaping is of high quality and quantity. A good mixture of plantings ranging from street, flowering and evergreen trees to shrubs, perennials and grasses has been effectively utilized to create a well-designed streetscape and appropriately planted and screened parking areas. Of particular note - is the choice to preserve and enhance the large swath of open space and existing trees along the southerly portion of the site and the Ringgold frontage. These elements help to appropriately transition the site into the adjacent commercial and residential neighborhoods.
4. The location and size of the proposed signage is appropriate.

The DRAC thanked the applicant for its participation in the review process which spanned three (3) formal meetings and five (5) study sessions over the course of this past year. They appreciated the applicant's willingness to actively participate in the review process and the ultimate consideration and inclusion of many of DRAC's comments in its revised and final project design.

STUDY SESSION:

503-511 New Park Avenue - *Study session preparatory to the submission of an amendment to SDD #94, West Hartford Place, for a new restaurant with drive-up window. (Initial DRAC Study Session on November 30, 2015.)*

The engineer for Chick-Fil-A discussed a prior meeting with the Todd Dumais, Town Planner where a traditional layout of Chick-Fil-A was presented showing the building and drive-through circulation in a different location than presented tonight. The Town Planner suggested bringing the building forward towards the street and that was presented in the current plan.

The restaurant requires 44 parking spaces, they are proposing 300 new plantings and are hoping to preserve as many Apple and Birch trees along New Park Avenue as possible. It was stated that 50 to 60 % of the restaurant business was associated with the drive-thru.

The overall feeling of the DRAC was the entrance area to the restaurant, particularly the entrance to the drive-thru and the dumpster area was too difficult to maneuver and congested. The DRAC made the following suggestions: explore the easement language to see if the dumpsters could be moved away from the entrance to the drive thru, rotate the concrete pad, graphically re-orientate the path of the drive-thru so it is more apparent where the flow of traffic should be, relocate some of the trees and modify the curbing around the entrance to the drive-thru. Also discussed considering moving the handicapped parking so it would have access directly to a sidewalk. The current plan showed it opposite the entrance but required crossing two drive aisles.

Additional information regarding the Chick-Fil-A operation was presented. The hours are 6:30 am to 10:00 pm., the trash enclosure is intended to match the façade of the building, true brick is proposed, the parapet wall will conceal the mechanicals, there are windows in the 'kitchen' area

(back of the building) along the entrance drive, the car stacking generally calls for 9 spaces between the order point and the pick-up window with 5 or 6 spaces before the double order board.

The DRAC expressed concern regarding the north elevation – along the common driveway. It was described as the back of the building – but DRAC felt the building should have four (4) ‘good’ sides and asked that they explore this elevation with additional vegetation and perhaps awnings. The Jared Jewelers building was mentioned as one having four good sides.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

- November 19, 2015 – Approved 4-0. Motion: Binkhorst/Second: Fritz. Voting: Crosby, Binkhorst, Fritz and Parsons-Whitaker

ADJOURNMENT: 6:10 P.M.

C: Ron Van Winkle, Town Manager
Patrick Alair, Deputy Corporation Counsel

Mark McGovern, Director of Community Services
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk

sd/DRAC/2015/Minutes/Nov30_Minutes